

March 11, 2015

CT General Assembly, Public Health Committee
Legislative Office Building 3000
Hartford, CT 06106

Testimony Regarding HB6285, An Act Concerning Smoking in Motor Vehicles

Distinguished Chairpersons and Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is David Hill. I am the Director of Clinical Research at Waterbury Pulmonary Associates, an Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine at both Yale University School of Medicine and Quinnipiac University, and a long time volunteer for the American Lung Association. I am deeply committed to the American Lung Association's mission which is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. Every day I see the negative impact secondhand smoke has on our youth in Connecticut, which is why I write to you regarding House Bill 6285, An Act Concerning Smoking in Motor Vehicles.

Secondhand smoke is a carcinogen. The Surgeon General has stated that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.¹ Children have higher oxygen requirements and breathe at a faster rate than adults which leads to increased damage from secondhand smoke. Those exposed to secondhand smoke have higher risks of asthma, ear infections, bronchitis, pneumonia, depression and ADHD. Being in a car where an adult smokes 2 cigarettes is similar to being in a smoke filled bar, something our state legislature has seen fit to ban in order to protect fully grown adult lungs. Children in cars are often not in a position to ask adults not to smoke. It is up to our state to mandate it and do so up to the age 18.

This proposed legislation suggests protecting youth age 6 and younger; as a pulmonary physician, I do have some concerns about this. Secondhand smoke exposure is worse for younger kids, but not safe for children or frankly anyone else. The lead article in the March 5th New England Journal of Medicine is about how lung development in children improved in California after air pollution was controlled. While not dealing with secondhand smoke exposure, it is important to note that the children were studied from 4th to 12th grade, all over the age of 7. The discussion in the study affirms that lungs are developing rapidly between the

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2006.

ages of 11 to 15 years and that lung function continues to develop in girls at least until their late teens and boys until their 20s.²

I know this is a piece of legislation that has been up for review many years now and I appreciate your persistence and passion to make this happen. Secondhand smoke is harmful to children's developing lungs and a carcinogen - we have an obligation to protect our youth from high levels of exposure in the close quarters of a car. I strongly feel we should be pushing for this restriction to be up to the age of 18.

I thank you for your time and consideration. As you consider how to proceed on this issue, I ask you to take a deep breath and recognize what a privilege that simple act is. Please protect our future generation's ability to breathe deeply as well.

Thank you.

David G. Hill, MD
Middlebury, CT

² Xiaobin Wang, Douglas W. Dockery, David Wypij, Diane R. Gold, Frank E. Speizer, James H. Ware, and Benjamin G. Ferris, Jr. Pulmonary Function Growth Velocity in Children 6 to 18 Years of Age. http://www.atsjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1164/ajrccm/148.6.Pt.1.1502?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori:rid:crossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%3dpubmed#.VPxL2ynisRk